

5 May 1970

MEMORANDUM

Enemy Stockpiles

1. The purpose of this memorandum is to determine the probable stockpile levels maintained by enemy forces in South Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia.

2. It is theoretically possible to calculate quantitative values that could provide parameters to the probable volume of enemy stockpiles. Careful consideration of the primary data base, however, shows it to be so soft that the margin of error in any calculation would undoubtedly be substantial. We have, for example, a number of variables -- consumption, losses (air, ground, and captured stocks), supply inputs (from North Vietnam, South Vietnam and Cambodia), and traffic throughputs (from Laos and Cambodia) -- which can fluctuate dramatically depending upon the sources and methodologies used to measure them. In addition, we lack the specific types of intelligence needed to identify the stockpiles which might be located in Laos, in Cambodia or in South Vietnam. Given these considerations, an attempt to quantify stockpiles would be unwise, both because of the high degree of inaccuracy that might result and the fact that the estimates could be seriously misleading.

3. Despite these problems, our knowledge of the enemy's logistical doctrine and our observation of his actions over the past several years enables us to conclude that he probably maintains stockpiles at relatively high levels. We know, for example, that NVA logistics doctrine calls for the maintenance of three types of stockpiles -- combat, campaign and strategic.

Combat stockpiles are maintained at battalion level or lower in dispersed forward caches in South Vietnam to provide a near-term reserve for planned combat operations. Their quantity is small -- an amount sufficient to support a specific operation without resort to stocks held in base areas.

NSA review completed

Campaign stocks are held in base areas judged by the enemy to be relatively secure from Allied sweep operations. Depending upon the area and security conditions, campaign stocks could be held in South Vietnam as well as in Laos or Cambodia. Captured documents indicate that campaign stocks should be held at a level of about 6 months of the projected annual resupply requirements.

Strategic stockpiles are maintained in secure rear base areas in Laos and Cambodia. They are controlled by high level logistic authorities such as the 559th Transportation Group as a hedge against the loss of campaign stocks and to guarantee logistic support in emergencies. We do not know the planned level at which strategic stockpiles are kept but judge them to be at least equal to campaign stocks and probably substantially higher. The enemy's ammunition losses during Operation About Face in Laos, for example, were an amount greater than two years of his estimated consumption requirements in Northern Laos.

4. The extent to which the enemy has executed successfully this logistics doctrine is unknown. The bulk of the evidence would support a judgment that he has been relatively successful. He has for years been moving supplies far in excess of his estimated requirements and during this time he has had ample opportunity to build up his stocks.

5. The most compelling argument that the enemy has successfully maintained reserve stockpiles is seen in the events during the summer of 1969. During the months of late May through late October 1969 the logistics systems through both Laos and Cambodia for all practical purposes ceased to function. An apparent decision not to keep the Laotian route open during the rainy season was paralleled by the decision of the Cambodian government to embargo supply shipments to Communist forces. Thus, with the exception of some resumption of shipments of foodstuffs from Cambodian sources, the enemy forces in the Panhandle of Laos and in South Vietnam were forced to rely primarily on existing stockpiles for a period of about five months.

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6. During these five months we estimate that the enemy consumed or lost to friendly action a minimum of 12,000 tons of supplies which could only have been replaced by drawing down on stockpiles. During the same period the enemy forces, though substantially reduced in numbers, maintained ammunition expenditures at just slightly below the 1968 rainy season. Although the character of the main force war changed significantly from 1968 to 1969, enemy initiated attacks during these five months were 40 percent higher than during the same period in 1968. Our screening of captured documents covering these months provides little evidence that the availability of supplies were a serious constraint or matter of concern to enemy forces.

7. Since October 1969 the enemy has had considerable success in moving supplies through Laos. Although we are unable to quantify these movements, a large body of evidence, including unusually reliable sources, makes it clear that the flow of supplies was undoubtedly sufficient to meet current requirements and to replenish depleted stockpiles.

8. We have little information with which to estimate the location of these supplies. Normally, a good share of them would be expected to be located in the base areas along the Cambodian border. However, in one of its initial reactions to the overthrow of Sihanouk, COSVN is known to have ordered its forces in Cambodia to take special measures for the further dispersal and protection of the caches located there.

Conclusions

9. The weight of the evidence supports a judgment that the performance of the enemy's rear service forces in executing Communist logistical doctrine has been sufficient to the task. We estimate that the enemy currently has in being an extensive and widely dispersed system of stockpiled goods. It is probable that these stockpiles are at least equal to his so-called campaign reserves -- 6 months -- and could be considerably greater. We are unable to quantify these stockpiles with any greater precision but would estimate that the bulk of them are located in the more secure areas of Cambodia and Laos. Thus, we would expect that the likelihood of considerable amounts of supplies being uncovered

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during the current operations in Cambodia could be high, provided that the enemy has not dispersed them even more widely than usual in anticipation of the Allied operations.

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